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**Amendments to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

1. - 30. (canceled)

31. (new) A tire tread comprising a sulfur-curable rubber compound, wherein the rubber compound comprises at least one diene rubber, at least one filler, at least one plasticizer and about 5 phr to about 90 phr of at least one layered silicate modified with alkylammonium ions and free of guest molecules that have been polymerized or swelled in by a prior treatment.

32. (new). The tire tread of claim 31, wherein the at least one layered silicate is present in an amount of at least about 40 phr.

33. (new) The tire tread of claim 32, wherein the at least one layered silicate is present in an amount of at least about 50 phr.

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34. (new) The tire tread of claim 33, wherein the at least one layered silicate is present in an amount of not more than about 80 phr.

35. (new) The tire tread of claim 31, wherein said alkylammonium ions comprise ions of general formula  ${}^+NR_4$ , wherein the radicals R are the same or different and at least one radical R is an alkyl group.

36. (new) The tire tread of claim 35, wherein the radicals R are selected from hydrogen, unsubstituted or substituted, saturated or unsaturated, linear or branched alkyl groups having 1 to 40 carbon atoms and substituted or unsubstituted aryl and benzyl groups, provided that at least one alkyl group is an alkyl group having at least 9 carbon atoms.

37. (new) The tire tread of claim 35, wherein all radicals R are alkyl groups.

38. (new) The tire tread of claim 35, wherein the at least one radical R is an alkyl group having at least 18 carbon atoms.

39. (new) The tire tread of claim 36, wherein the radicals R comprise at least two alkyl groups having at least 18 carbon atoms.

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40. (new) The tire tread of claim 31, wherein said alkylammonium ions comprise a dimethyl dioctadecyl ammonium ion.

41. (new) The tire tread of claim 32, wherein the at least one plasticizer comprises at least one processing oil which is present in an amount of from about 2 phr to about 50 phr.

42. (new) The tire tread of claim 31, wherein the rubber compound further comprises carbon black in an amount of up to about 85 phr, with a total amount of carbon black and layered silicate not exceeding about 90 phr.

43. (new) A vehicle tire which comprises the tire tread of claim 32.

44. (new) A racing tire which comprises the tire tread of claim 31.

45. (new) A sulfur-curable rubber compound for a tire tread rubber, wherein the rubber compound comprises at least one diene rubber, at least one filler, at least one plasticizer which comprises at least one processing oil in an amount of from about 2 phr to about 50 phr, and about 40 phr to about 90 phr of at least one layered silicate modified with alkylammonium ions and free of guest molecules that have been polymerized or swelled in

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by a prior treatment.

46. (new) The rubber compound of claim 45, wherein the at least one layered silicate is present in an amount of at least about 50 phr.

47. (new) The rubber compound of claim 45, wherein the at least one layered silicate is present in an amount of not more than about 85 phr.

48. (new) The rubber compound of claim 46, wherein the at least one layered silicate is present in an amount of not more than about 80 phr.

49. (new) The rubber compound of claim 45, wherein said alkylammonium ions comprise ions of general formula  $^+NR_4$ , wherein the radicals R are the same or different and at least one radical R is an alkyl group.

50. (new) The rubber compound of claim 49, wherein the radicals R are selected from hydrogen, unsubstituted or substituted, saturated or unsaturated, linear or branched alkyl groups having 1 to 40 carbon atoms and substituted or unsubstituted aryl and benzyl groups, provided that at least one alkyl group is an alkyl group having at least 9 carbon atoms.

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51. (new) The rubber compound of claim 49, wherein all radicals R are alkyl groups.

52. (new) The rubber compound of claim 49, wherein the at least one radical R is an alkyl group having at least 18 carbon atoms.

53. (new) The rubber compound of claim 50, wherein the radicals R comprise at least two alkyl groups having at least 14 carbon atoms.

54. (new) The rubber compound of claim 45, wherein said alkylammonium ions comprise a dimethyl dioctadecyl ammonium ion.

55. (new) The rubber compound of claim 49, wherein said ions of general formula  ${}^+\text{NR}_4$  comprise a total of not less than 20 and not more than 80 carbon atoms.

56. (new) The rubber compound of claim 49, wherein said ions of general formula  ${}^+\text{NR}_4$  comprise a total of not less than 30 and not more than 60 carbon atoms.

57. (new) The rubber compound of claim 45, wherein the modified layered silicate has a carbon content of about 5 to about 50 percent by weight.

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58. (new) The rubber compound of claim 48, wherein the rubber compound further comprises carbon black in an amount of about 5 to about 50 phr, a total amount of carbon black and layered silicate not exceeding about 90 phr.

59. (new) A method of making a tire tread, comprising preparing a rubber compound by mixing at least one diene rubber, at least one plasticizer and other conventional components for tire tread rubbers with about 5 phr to about 90 phr of at least one layered silicate modified with alkylammonium ions and free of guest molecules that have been polymerized or swelled in by a prior treatment, forming said compound into a tire tread rubber and curing said compound in the presence of a sulfur vulcanizing agent.

60. (new) The method of claim 59, wherein about 40 phr to about 85 phr of the at least one layered silicate are used.